

# JACK OF CLUBS

BY GERALD BEAUMONT

Introducing Some Sentiment into the Forty Strong Gang

This face was scratched from scalp to chin; the eyes were closed as he staggered in a faint. "I'm Foley," the fighting cop, says he. "Will you look what a lady does to me?"

APT. MALLOY of the Southern Station looked thoughtfully at his subordinate. "He's supposed to be the best latter in the department. The night of the stevedore riot in Cesare's place he walked in with the cuffs wrapped around his left fist and his rightstick in the other, and before they got him out he registered seventeen home runs. Babe Ruth can't knock 'em any farther."

"Sounds good," admitted Capt. Malloy. "Young, is he?"

"Twenty-two, and built from the ground up. He thinks John L. Sullivan found the department and the dove of peace is something you put in a poppie."

Malloy chuckled.

"I've seen the type. Not any notion of a peace officer, but sometimes they turn out to be good men. Those old fellows led the hoodlums play marbles on their coat tails. Jack of Clubs, you say? I'll see what Central Station let us have him."

Thus destiny acting on that time-honored principle, "When in doubt, lead trump," took a young cop by the scruff of the neck and chucked him into a game of "high, low, jack and the queen."

John Francis Foley, police officer 421, blue-eyed, jaunty, and with a very conspicuous chip on his shoulder, reported to Capt. Malloy, and found himself assigned to a 4-o'clock-to-midnight watch in a territory with which he was unfamiliar.

"Along 5th to Sanchez," instructed his superior, "Sanchez to Seaview, north to Vernal, and east to point of commencement."

Then privately he explained to the new man:

"Spike Kennedy's fight club is up there, and the young pugs are inclined to congregate on the corners or in vacant lots. Keep 'em dispersed for your own good."

"Yes, sir," said Foley. "Seems like I heard about that gang. I'm in to bust 'em up, captain."

The muscles around Capt. Malloy's lips twitched a moment.

"I said 'disperse,' he reminded. "It's the proper police term, and it means to cause to separate." You can use your own judgment."

At the corner of 5th and Hollis, where the First Christian Church rears an immaculate white steeple, opposite Pete Rizzoli's very dirty coal yard, Officer Foley encountered the proprietor of the latter establishment and recognized in him a brother Knight of Columbus. "What do you do up here?"

"Just looking for a little exercise," grinned the Jack of Clubs. "Know anything about a gang of toughs hangin' around?"

The proprietor of the coal yard lifted at his trousers and swore dolefully.

"They take five ton of coal out my back yard and chuck every bit through the windows of Schmaltz's butcher shop."

"Did, eh? You know where any of 'em live?"

"I know where they all live," said Pete. "Some day I put a bomb in each sack."

"Well, give me their addresses," suggested Foley. "And maybe you won't need no bombs."

"That's all right," Foley replied. "I'll let you next to the carbarns."

"You remember where the lady found Moses? Well, those are the only kind of flowers for a cop."

Pete looked puzzled.

"Bullrusher," exploded the Jack of Clubs. "So long!"

He sauntered off, cap over one eye and lips pursed in a whistle that challenged the world. Mr. Rizzoli gazed admiringly at the officer's retreating figure.

"That's one tough young cop, all right," he commented. "I think something goin' bust around here pretty quick."

The prophecy was fulfilled only ten minutes later, when eight husky members of the Forty Strong Gang, seated on a lumber pile, viewed with unfeigned interest the approach of a new cop. Most officers would have heeded the old proverb, "Let sleeping dogs lie," but the Jack of Clubs had his own ideas regarding the importance of first impressions. He vaulted the low fence and advanced stiff-legged, after the manner of a terrier approaching a strange dog. The gathering on the lumber pile was mildly puzzled, but no one moved. Officer Foley continued his advance, still they sat there, watching him. When an irresistible cop encounters an immovable tough, what is it that happens? Never mind! The Jack of Clubs selected the biggest man in the bunch.

"What you doin' around here?" he demanded.

The one addressed favored his interrogator with a languid glance before looking dreamily off into space.

"Oh," he drawled. "I guess we can sit around here and wait."

"What?" The descending nightstick smashed a brown derby and sent its owner rolling backward off the lumber pile.

The Jack of Clubs grabbed two on-lookers and banged their heads together. The others fled. He made no effort to pursue, contenting himself with obtaining the names and addresses of the three that remained. Then he introduced himself.

"Hereafter when you meet me on the street I want you to say, 'How do you do, Mr. Foley.' We'll begin practicing now. Say it!"

They complied, eyes on his club. "How do you do, Mr. Foley?"

"That's good. Now go on about your business."

They departed, looking rather dazed. The Jack of Clubs checked off three names from his list of addresses.

THAT was the beginning of the most brilliant campaign ever conducted by a young police officer for the honor of the department and his own pleasure. Hitherto the Vernal Heights gang had operated on the well established policy of "starting something" whenever the mood impelled. But here was a cop who believed in starting things himself. He took the initiative and he kept it. In vain they launched a counter offensive. One after another they tried the old tricks that had been successful in the past. They staged a fake fight in the street when they saw him approaching, and the combatants ran into a stable where the whole gang was hidden, armed with pick handles. But Foley didn't follow. Had he done so there would have been one more funeral in the police department.

Instead, he bided his time and polished them off individually, checking their names in his address book one by one. Many hard-boiled citizens of Vernal Heights, mauling home at midnight, alone and unprotected, discovered the Jack of Clubs sitting patiently on the front steps, awaiting their arrival. These nocturnal encounters were brief, but none the less impressive. They usually ended in the victim stumbling up his steps, handkerchief to his nose and mumbling:

"How do you do, Mr. Foley; how do you do? Yes, officer, I'll remember."

It got so bad that they were afraid to go home. Then he varied his attack by swearing by warrants and dragging them out of bed at 3 o'clock in the morning. There was no chance at that hour to get bail, no chance to tip off an influential friend. The charges were always dismissed, as they got word to Sheriff Randolph, who was a brother-in-law to Spike Kennedy, but for a few hours the Southern Station had the pleasure of entertaining some of its old enemies.

One day, however, a certain deal, proffered his congratulations.

"Atta boy, Jack! I tell the world you come! How you like a 10 grapevine, eh? Good! I leave something by the door when I close up."

The Vernal Heights Lodge, a prominent Cop passed resolutions commending Officer Foley, merchants along 5th street stopped him to shake hands, Capt. Malloy posted a commendation on the bulletin board.

Thus honored in every direction should reveal symptoms of that fatal pride that goes before destruction.

Stung to quick and humiliated beyond endurance by what now amounted to persecution, the members of the Forty Strong Gang rallied under the standard of Spike Kennedy, former heavyweight champion and now the proprietor and match-maker for the Vernal Heights fight club. Other quarrels were forgotten, old feuds buried, and from one end of the district to the other and young whispered the ancient shibboleth, "Get that cop!"

They were respectful enough when they passed him on the street, but the "How do you do, Mr. Foley" held a hint of menace never sufficient to warrant his taking action, but just enough to keep him guessing.

Then for ten days there was a complete lull. Not a window was broken, not one disturbance of the peace occurred. The Jack of Clubs began to fret. He found no outlet for his energy, no excuse for maintaining his reputation. He walked the curb by day and the building line at night, according to the regulations, but the only bit of rowdiness that occurred was a battle between a bulldog and a tomcat, and that was over very quickly.

"This is a bum beat," he told himself. "If old man Williams was out here now he'd hang a hammock on the trolley tracks and snore until the sergeant woke him up."

But the following night, without any warning, the storm broke. It was a girl who trumped the Jack of Clubs, thereby changing the whole aspect of the game.

Before you go any further you should know something about Miss Tilly Miller, who had just as much right to the title of "Queen of Hearts" as John Francis Foley had to his non de guerre of the Jack of Clubs. Tilly was a native daughter of Vernal Heights, which meant she was brought up on the streets and overalls until she was fourteen. Her juvenile accomplishments included: kicking heavy five brothers, throwing rocks through the windows of the Chinese laundry and hopping street cars.

The first bit of poetry she mastered began with "All policemen have big feet" and ended in a mad dash for safety on the part of the elocutionist.

When Miss Miller was eighteen she made the interesting discovery that nature had endowed her with violet eyes, lustrous black hair and a voice of considerable sweetness. Portentously she purchased a fur coat and a vanity box, and when certain admirers among the Forty Strong Gang hinted of their willingness to invest in furniture and a ring she responded gaily:

"How do you get that way?"

Of course, that only increased the number of her suitors. Miss Miller was uncertain whether to burst upon the world via grand opera or the silver screen, but she finally compromised by singing illustrated ballads at Sid Greenbaum's motion picture house on 5th street. There she became the acknowledged Queen of Hearts of Vernal Heights, and it was in this capacity that the Jack of Clubs first beheld her. The spotlight enhanced the charm of her slim figure and piquant features, and she was singing, with the enthusiastic aid of the gallery:

"I never knew, till I met you, What a beautiful world it was."

ALAS for Police Officer John Francis Foley! He felt just as hard as though Cupid had beamed him with his own club. Night after night he dropped in at Greenbaum's Theater at the exact hour of Miss Miller's act, and there he stood, his mouth open, peering through the lobby curtains at the entrancing vision on the stage. His applause was so emphatic and his comments to the chief usher so artlessly frank that the news eventually percolated back stage and reached the ears of the Queen of Hearts.

"A cop!" exclaimed Miss Miller, whose sympathies were entirely with the Forty Strong Gang. "Why, I'll smack his face for him!"

Thus matters stood on the evening when destiny played one of those little pranks for which it is celebrated. It was all the fault of Sid Greenbaum for hiring a new organist in the person of Signor Roselli, who considered himself quite as important an attraction as the Queen of Hearts. Miss Miller thought otherwise, and she proceeded to enlighten her accompanist in the lobby shortly after their number was over.

"Say, listen to me, Spaghetini!" began the Queen of Hearts. "The next time you try to drown me out with that bum organ I'll bang you right on the nose!"

"Bah!" said the signor. "Eef I drown you, it'll be on my spare the nose. Too much tremolo in the voice. You and one lady goat make good duet!"

Bang!

Twenty seconds later two talented artists were engaged in mortal combat, and Sid Greenbaum was out on the sidewalk blowing a police whistle as fast as he could draw breath.

Two blocks away the Jack of Clubs heard the summons. He wheeled in his tracks, clapped a hand to his holster to keep the heavy pistol from falling out and broke into a run. A very pretty riot was going on in the vestibule of the Greenbaum Theater. Officer Foley, pursuing the methods of a snowplow, bucked his way to the center of the disturbance, and there uncovered Signor Roselli, still struggling in the clutches of the Queen of Hearts.

"Here, here!" he remonstrated. "Cut that out! Leggo of him, lady! Leave him alone!"

He pried open the girl's fingers, releasing the professor's necktie, and thereby saving its owner from immediate strangulation. Promptly Miss Miller's disengaged hand doubled over the professor's head, and with Officer Foley's left eye.

"But in, will you?" screamed the Queen of Hearts. "I'll show you one person in Vernal Heights that can't bluff. Take that, and lemme finish!"

Off went Officer Foley's cap, and his cheeks showed the scarlet trail of feminine finger nails. It needed only encouragement like that to set fifty spectators lunging at him like a pack of wolves. The Jack of Clubs thrust the girl from him, ranked one and tenightstick and backed desperately against the wall. He recognized among his assailants Spike Kennedy and other members of the gang. Then he lost his head and fought blindly, the last of battle raging in his veins.

Many the bitter hour he later spent in trying to recall just what happened during those next few moments, but it was all a disordered nightmare. He thought his rights reached its photograph on his memory—a girl's figure flashed in between him and his assailants. Over her head the Jack of Clubs aimed a savage blow at a man who was wielding a blackjack. He thought his rights reached its photograph on his memory—a girl's figure flashed in between him and his assailants. Over her head the Jack of Clubs aimed a savage blow at a man who was wielding a blackjack.

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